01000

1963/09/30

Copy for Pentagon File

Vietnam

Personal

DINH DOC LAP

SAIGON

Paris September 30th, 1965

Mr Vice President L. Johnson

of the United States of America

Dear Mr Vice President :

Your letter of Sept. 20th has been delivered to me, by the Embassy of the USA at Belgrade with a short note which took the great care of specifying that : "The USA does not plan to publish the text of the letter", notice which seems to me, for the least, rather superfluous.

Indeed I am not accustomed to publishing anything addressed to me, without the agreement of the author, unless there are threats or blackmail the publishing of which becomes, then, a case of legitimate self-defense.

I think that you will "appreciate the sincerity of my feelings" towards the USA and its generous help for Vietnam in her gallant struggle against international communism.

Thus believe me when I affirm that I have never wished to wage a "battle against the press". It is, however, my duty to clarify my position of scapegoat, and also an effort which I must really try, as much for my country as for my own conscience, because I would really feel myself a traitor if I let people use me to harm my country and its hard-earned prestige.

Moreover, I refuse to play the role of an accomplice in an awful murder.

Indeed, according to a few immature american junior officials-too imbued by a real but obsolete imperialist spirit, the vietnamese regime is not puppet enough and must be liquidated.

But about being a puppet or not, there is in fact no reason to make an issue of this, since according to what I know, we are all ready to follow advice if they do not keep requesting from us la quadrature du cercle.

There is also one thing that you seem to ignore, dear Mr Vice President, it is that when one wants to drown a dog, one always says that it is mad.

For that purpose, your junior officials do not hesitate to sabotage the official policy of your government, to destroy its best card which is the winning effort of our two peoples in Vietnam to interfere in the intimacy of families and try to break their unity (they have succeeded with my own family, but fortunately failed with my in-laws), to terrorize and kick away in shame their own bosses if these dare to think otherwise, all this in order to try to prove that their Vietnamese underdog is mad. And why should they try to prove it mad in order to drown it ? It is just because they "do not like" that underdog, the legally elected leaders of Vietnam.

I wonder what you would think of us if, in exchange for your material aid and a symbolic human contribution (this last one given to us, not at all as another condition of pressure but only as I understand it, to show to the world that we are not mercenaries, since it is a real common struggle of our two united people) - if in exchange for all this we still consider our contribution in ideas and men as priceless, therefore more worthy. If strengthened by the feeling that you need us as much as we need you, we should refuse to deal with the elected government of the USA just because we "do not like" it, - if then, instead of concentrating time and energy in fighting the common enemy, we wasted all this in trying to overthrow your government in order to put in its place your opposition ?

All this sounds ridiculous ! Have you not noticed that the ridicule comes just from the fact that we are too weak to ever dare to dream of such actions, while your country is strong enough to permit any group of its own adventurers to do this to any underdeveloped country, short-sighted enough to receive those adventurers ?

The unbelievable thing is that, instead of protecting the material aid it gives us, by giving us at the same time a strong moral aid and defending our rear carefully, in order to sustain our courage and permit us to put all our time and energy in the fight we lead in the front line, your Government by lack of control, has let its junior officials stab us in the back with open attempts to disorganise our ranks thanks to briberies, threats and other means to overthrow our legally elected government which has proven itself not only in its own country but in the face of the world as well.

And now that those murderous attempts have all failed, attempts which even tried, to put all the blame for that crime on my husband and myself, we are told now to bow to an opinion which a frivolous Free world has cared very little to inform, which is in fact its very duty, since we are fighting at the front line not only for us but for the Free World as well.

Even more, with slogans like "deeds rather than words", we are urged now to give proof to those who could not drown us, in spite of all their desire, that if we are no more mad, in that case we have been such, just for them to explain somehow their own criminal attempts and deeds.

All the present activides of your junior officials in Saigon still do not tend to anything else than to this desperate purpose.

Moreover what can I say, Mr Vice President, when American Senators and Congressmen viciously attack my Government, the National Assembly and my family ? After all this, would you make a crime of my words, because I suggested that President Kennedy "might be misinformed" because he based his personal judgement on our unworthy opposition, rather than the legal decisions of our people ?

It is why, in spite of handicaps such as my real physical fragility and my single-handed struggle in an unknown sphere, I am determined all the same to carry through the work that in fact your Government should do for us, which is to inform the world, without committing the mistake and the injustice to believe that things would be easier if the blame is put on the victims.

I think indeed that as long as the case of Vietnam is not clear, it will be impossible for you to continue to help us, though we are your best card, for we are winning and are your most valuable allies in Asia.

On the other hand, trying at the expense of honesty to cover the handful of unworthy people who have misinformed you at the point to bring your government to that impasse, or worse, letting them continue to fabricate evidence to support their views, will harm not only our common struggle the victory of which is already in sight, but moreover will harm also the prestige of your country not only in my country but also all over the world, because injustice chiefly if committed in that way by a powerful country like yours against an underdeveloped but courageous and effective country like mine cannot be ignored, smothered or approved.

Of course I know that those who wish to drown us, try to present the vietnamese regime as the oppressor, lacking of all popular support and they as the saviors of the oppressed -, but neither you nor I and the world as well would be so "completely candid" to believe such a tale, just because not a single detailed proof can be advanced to support their accusations of oppression.

I beg you then not to feel that your "only fear is of the damage which faces South Vietnam if there cannot be a new spirit of sincere reconciliation between the Government and people of (my) country".

The last straw is to see your new ambassador - for whom I was so favorably prejudiced and from whom I have expected so much - breaking a long and mysterious silence, just to condemn me with the hardest terms on the basis of false reports and this, just a few days before our elections where the women of my movement had to face so many difficulties already, because of my absence from the country and the male disloyalty and rivalry in our own ranks.

I am glad anyway to find at least one person in your government with whom I can talk like this, for I know that you too "welcome a frank exchange of views and it is in this spirit that I have written to you in such a direct fashion".

I am also happy to hear that neither you nor those among you "could feel frightened by a lovely lady", in spite of your press too often inspired by official american departments such as USIS, which usually presents me as a little monster hated and rejected by every one, including her own parents.

Please accept my very best regards and extend them as well to Mrs Johnson.

Sincerely,

Madame NGO DINH NHU

TRANSCRIPTION FOLLOWS

Vietnam

PERSONAL

DINH DOC LAP
[illegible word]

Paris September 30th, 1963

Mr. Vice President L. Johnson
of The United States of America

Dear Mr. Vice President:

Your letter of Sept. 20th has been delivered to me, by the Embassy of the USA at Belgrade with a short note which took the great care of specifying that: "The USA does not plan to publish the text of the letter", notice which seems to me, for the least, rather superfluous.

Indeed I am not accustomed to publishing anything addressed to me, without the agreement of the author, unless there are threats or blackmail the publishing of which becomes, then, a case of legitimate self-defense.

I think that you will "appreciate the sincerity of my feelings" towards the USA and its generous help for Vietnam in her gallant struggle against international communism.

Thus believe me when I affirm that I have never wished to wage a "battle against the press". It is, however, my duty to clarify my position of scapegoat, and also an effort which I must really try, as much for my country as for my own conscience, because I would really feel myself a traitor if I let people use me to harm my country and its hard-earned prestige.

Moreover, I refuse to play the role of an accomplice in an awful murder.

Indeed, according to a few immature American junior officials - too imbued by a real but obsolete imperialist spirit, the Vietnamese regime is not puppet enough and must be liquidated.

But about being a puppet or not, there is in fact no reason to make an issue of this, since according to what I know, we are all ready to follow advice if they do not keep requesting from us la quadrature du cercle.

There is also one thing that you seem to ignore, dear Mr. Vice President, it is that when one wants to drown a dog, one always says that it is mad.

For that purpose, your junior officials do not hesitate to sabotage the official policy of your government, to destroy its best card which is the winning effort of our two peoples in Vietnam to interfere in the intimacy of families and try to break their unity (they have succeeded with my own family, but fortunately failed with my in-laws), to terrorize and kick away in shame their own bosses if these dare to think otherwise, all this in order to try to prove that their Vietnamese underdog is mad. And why should they try to prove it mad in order to drown it? It is just because they "do not like" that underdog, the legally elected leaders of Vietnam.

I wonder what you would think of us if, in exchange for your material aid and a symbolic human contribution (this last one given to us, not at all as another condition of pressure but only as I understand it, to show to the world that we are not mercenaries, since it is a real common struggle of our two united people) - if in exchange for all this we still consider our contribution in ideas and men as priceless, therefore more worthy. If strengthened by the feeling that you need us as much as we need you, we should refuse to deal with the elected government of the USA just because we "do not like" it, - if then, instead of concentrating time and energy in fighting the common enemy, we wasted all this in trying to overthrow your government in order to put in its place your opposition?

All this sounds ridiculous! Have you not noticed that the ridicule comes just from the fact that we are too weak to ever dare to dream of such actions, while your country is strong enough to permit any group of its own adventurers to do this to any underdeveloped country, short-sighted enough to receive those adventurers?

The unbelievable thing is that, instead of protecting the material aid it gives us, by giving us at the same time a strong moral aid and defending our rear carefully, in order to sustain our courage and permit us to put all our time and energy in the fight we lead in the front line, your Government by lack of control, has let its junior officials stab us in the back with open attempts to disorganise [sic] our ranks thanks to briberies, threats and other means to overthrow our legally elected government which has proven itself not only in its own country but in the face of the world as well.

And now that those murderous attempts have all failed, attempts which even tried to put all the blame for that crime on my husband and myself, we are told now to bow to an opinion which a frivolous Free World has cared very little to inform, which is in fact its very duty, since we are fighting at the front line not only for us but for the Free World as well.

Even more, with slogans like "deeds rather than words", we are urged now to give proof to those who could not drown us, in spite of all their desire, that if we <u>are no more</u> mad, in that case <u>we have been</u> such, just for them to explain somehow their own criminal attempts and deeds.

All the present activities of your junior officials in Saigon still do not tend to anything else than to this desperate purpose.

Moreover what can I say, Mr. Vice President, when American Senators and Congressmen viciously attack my Government, the National Assembly and my family? After all this, would you make a crime of my words, because I suggested that President Kennedy "might be misinformed" because he based his personal judgement on our unworthy opposition, rather than the legal decisions of our people?

It is why, in spite of handicaps such as my real physical fragility and my single-handed struggle in an unknown sphere, I am determined all the same to carry through the work that in fact your government should do for us, which is to inform the world, without committing the mistake and the injustice to believe that things would be easier if the blame is put on the victims.

I think indeed that as long as the case of Vietnam is not clear, it will be impossible for you to continue to help us, though we are your best card, for we are winning and are your most valuable allies in Asia.

On the other hand, trying at the expense of honesty to cover the handful of unworthy people who have misinformed you at the point to bring your government to that impasse, or worse, letting them continue to fabricate evidence to support their views, will harm not only our common struggle the victory of which is already in sight, but moreover will harm also the prestige of your country not only in my country but also all over the world, because injustice chiefly if committed in that way by a powerful country like yours against an underdeveloped but courageous and effective country like mine cannot be ignored, smothered or approved.

Of course I know that those who wish to drown us, try to present the Vietnamese regime as the oppressor, lacking of all popular support and they as the saviors of the oppressed -, but neither you nor I and the world as well would be so "completely candid" to believe such a tale, just because not a single detailed proof can be advanced to support their accusations of oppression.

I beg you then not to feel that your "only fear is of the damage which faces South Vietnam if there cannot be a new spirit of sincere reconciliation between the Government and people of (my) country".

The last straw is to see your new ambassador - for whom I was so favorably prejudiced and from whom I have expected so much - breaking a long and mysterious silence, just to condemn me with the hardest terms on the basis of false reports and this, just a few days before our elections where the women of my movement had to face so many difficulties already, because of my abscence [sic] from the country and the male disloyalty and rivalry in our own ranks.

I am glad anyway to find at least one person in your government with whom I can talk like this, for I know that you too "welcome a frank exchange of views and it is in this spirit that I have written to you in such a direct fashion".

I am also happy to hear that neither you nor those among you "could feel frightened by a lovely lady", in spite of your press too often inspired by official american [sic] departments such as USIS, which usually presents me as a little monster hated and rejected by every one, including her own parents.

Please accept my very best regards and extend them as well to Mrs. Johnson.

Sincerely,

Madame NGO DINH NHU